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Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
Committee on International Relations

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations
House Foreign Relations Subcommittee Hearing
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11:00 a.m.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Last week, we released the State Department's *2006 Trafficking in Persons Report*. As mandated by Congress, this, the sixth annual such compendium, recognizes trafficking in persons for what it is, modern-day slavery. The *Report* also demonstrates that every country in the world, including the United States of America, has a human trafficking problem.

Trafficking in persons relies on coercion and exploitation. It thrives on converting hope to fear. It is maintained through violence. And it is highly profitable.

The State Department and our embassies' goal is to spotlight the scourge of human trafficking and work with governments to jail traffickers, protect victims and ultimately eliminate this problem. These efforts aim also to expose the tricks of the slave masters, which are the same as they were back in the 19th century, namely, deception, fraud, kidnapping, and control through confinement, beating, rape, and, in some cases, murder.

This year's *Report* ranks 149 countries found to be a source, destination, or transit country for on the order of 100 victims, the threshold for inclusion in the report. Nine additional nations are listed as special cases. Generally, countries not listed in the *Report* are either those about which we have insufficient knowledge of human trafficking – oftentimes countries where there are fewer than 100 documented trafficking cases -- or those where there has not been an effective government to rank during the reporting period.

Woven throughout the introduction of this year's *Report* are the stories of victims of trafficking. In fact, this year's edition is dedicated to one such victim, Nour Miyati, a young Indonesian woman who went to the Near East as a domestic servant hoping to find money for her family.

I met with Nour Miyati in Riyadh. Nour Miyati, as you will see from the picture in the back of the Report, has missing fingers, missing toes; a victim of abuse, servitude, and torture. She is a reminder that although the *Report* describes governments and categories, it is in the end about individual human beings who have suffered the terrible indignities of this evil trade.

Our sources are diverse: law enforcement, U.S. Embassies, NGOs worldwide, daring activists, foreign governments, and our own visits. Everything enters the mix. Extensive analysis and review goes into the assessment of each country and its assignment into Tier 1, 2, 2 Watch List, or 3.

Country ratings are based strictly on governments' actions to combat trafficking in persons, as defined by U.S. law. The standards are set forth in the *Trafficking Victim's Protection Act*, as amended, and are applied equally to every country. We examine each country individually.

The goal of this report is not to punish, but to stimulate government action to end modern-day slavery.

This year, we decided to place special emphasis on trafficking for labor exploitation, particularly involuntary servitude of foreign laborers. Forced labor may involve foreign workers who end up in conditions of involuntary servitude, or domestic servants, or victims trafficked within their own country.

Sex trafficking is still the largest category of transnational slavery, we believe. It is intrinsically linked to prostitution and U.S. policy states that prostitution contributes to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. That is why, to combat sex slavery, we are urging a greater focus on demand—educating and dissuading the so-called “customers.”

I want to highlight that under U.S. federal law and international law, If a child is under the age of 18 and is being used for a commercial sex act, the child is considered a victim of trafficking; and a crime victim, regardless of the child's consent, and an individual who exploits a prostituted child should be punished. Anyone who facilitates that act of exploitation is a trafficker. Yet many countries around the world simply do very little about children who are victims of trafficking.

Comparing this year's report with that of last year, we have hard evidence that Tier 2 Watch list and Tier 3 are effective designations. Thanks to intensified engagement by the Department of State and increased political commitment from the governments themselves, anti-slavery efforts improved in many countries.

Of the 14 countries placed on Tier 3 this time last year, eight have moved up: five moved up within three months (when the President made a final determination of ranking last September) and another three, Cambodia, Ecuador, and Kuwait, moved up on this year's report.

The Tier 2 Watch list countries showed similar improvement: of the 27 countries placed on Tier 2W in 2005, 16 moved up to Tier 2 while three fell to Tier 3 (Belize, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe).

Ecuador is a good example. This past year, its government enacted new measures to identify trafficking situations, arrest and prosecute traffickers, assist victims, and raise public awareness. Ecuador has jumped from Tier 3 to Tier 2 in the 2006 *TIP Report*.

United Arab Emirates and Jamaica, with very different slave problems, both took exemplary action to move off Tier 3.

In the United Arab Emirates, hundreds of camel jockey boys—former slaves—have been repatriated, returned to their home countries (especially to Bangladesh and Pakistan). UAE opened a shelter devoted to rescued victims of human trafficking and robots are riding camels instead of children.

Jamaica increased efforts to investigate trafficking crimes, undertook raids and arrests, and temporarily suspended work permits for foreign “exotic dancers,” some of whom were victims of human trafficking.

Greece is an excellent example of improvement over time. In 2003: Tier 3 and in 2005: Tier Two. Greece moved up to Tier 2 by demonstrating significant dedication to protecting victims in cooperation with NGOs. Greece improved cooperation with domestic NGOs with the completion of a Memorandum of Cooperation allowing Greek authorities to work more directly with NGOs, and after several years of negotiation, Greece signed an agreement with Albania for the repatriation of Albanian victims. So often, greater effort is a low cost or no cost

initiative. And the good news is positive, increased efforts on the part of many countries.

The bad news is lack of effort by some of the world's largest countries. On every continent, countries are failing to live up to their obligation to protect the weak, and bring criminals to justice.

In every case, as for all Tier 3 and Tier 2 Watch list countries, the U.S. will outline a mini-action plan through which to spur commitment, together, on behalf of modern-day slaves.

Notice that several Tier 2 Watch list designees are there largely as a result of labor trafficking, including Brazil, Israel, the Gulf States, Taiwan, and India.

Shining through this global tragedy are rays of hope. In addition to the tremendous efforts of heroic individuals and private organizations, governments around the globe are awakening to the issue and taking action to end this form of modern-day slavery.

Worldwide, the number of trafficking-related convictions has increased to more than 4,750 in 2005—a 63 percent increase in just two years.

An additional 41 countries passed anti-trafficking legislation last year—strengthening the world's legal tools with which to hold traffickers accountable.

The movement to end modern slavery, therefore, continues to gain momentum, thanks to the President's leadership and Congress's commitment. This hearing and the work of this panel represent vital components of the 21st century abolitionist movement and the effort to protect the hundreds of thousands of silent victims of the international crime of modern-day slavery.

Thank you.